News Release
Ministry of Northern Development and Mines

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Ontario Committed To Resolution In Far North Mineral Exploration Dispute

Seeks Intervenor Status In Court Proceedings

SUDBURY – The Ontario Government is seeking intervenor status to participate in injunction proceedings between Platinex Inc. and Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (KI) First Nation. Negotiations on a consultation process continued yesterday at the Ontario Superior Court in Thunder Bay but no agreement was reached.

"Ontario remains optimistic that a resolution can be reached between the two parties and that is why we are seeking intervenor status," said Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Rick Bartolucci. "We believe it's important to continue to proactively pursue a resolution that is acceptable to all."

Although Ontario is not a party to the injunction proceedings between Platinex and KI, the Honourable Mr. Justice G.P. Smith's interim order in July 2006 required a consultation process be developed for the Platinex drilling project and that the Crown be involved.

"The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, together with KI and Platinex, has worked hard on this issue and we will continue to devote our efforts toward finding a solution," said Bartolucci. "It's only reasonable that all three parties should have the opportunity to move the yardsticks forward. It's my hope that KI and Platinex will support our request to participate in the proceedings."

One of the outstanding issues is the signing of a technical process agreement being drafted to guide the consultation. Ministry staff indicated they would be prepared to sign a completed protocol and the minister has written to the Chief of KI offering to sign a Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC).

"I have signed similar MOCs with other communities in the past, which reflect a broader political commitment to work together to improve the understanding of each other's responsibilities, requirements, practices and expectations," said Bartolucci. "In our experience, these agreements can form the basis for the more technical agreements that follow."

The ministry recognizes the Crown's obligation to respect and honour the Aboriginal and treaty rights of communities and that communities have a right to be appropriately consulted and accommodated as set out in recent Supreme Court decisions. The Supreme Court decisions also confirmed the importance of all parties engaging in a reciprocal, constructive consultation process.

The ministry has been working cooperatively with First Nations to support increased participation by Aboriginal peoples in decisions that affect their lives. It will soon be initiating public discussions on developing mining-related Aboriginal consultation guidelines.

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